

Medal of Honor:
Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty
Content Area: Social Studies Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Developed By: Jim Corey – Eagle High School

Lesson Focus: Per Idaho Code (33-512) - Governance of Schools.

“...and for each Veterans Day, each school in session shall conduct and observe an appropriate program of at least one (1) class period remembering and honoring American veterans...”

Purpose: To honor Idaho Veterans on Veterans Day by recognizing the extraordinary contributions made by America’s Medal of Honor recipients, specifically the six men who currently live here in the state of Idaho.

Quotes:

“I’d rather have the Medal of Honor than be president of the United States.” Harry S. Truman

“Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality that guarantees all others.” Sir Winston Churchill

Objectives: Students will be able to do the following:

- identify the major wars (conflicts) the United States has been involved in since the birth of our nation
- trace the history of the Congressional Medal of Honor from its inception in 1861 to the present (number of recipients, conflicts, and three forms of the medal. etc.)
- describe the history of Veterans Day
- describe the heroic acts performed by one or more of the six medal recipients living in Idaho

Idaho Achievement Standards:

497.01 Understand significant conflicts in United States history.

Materials/Resources:

1. “America’s War” from *America’s 20th Century Heroes: Celebrating Veterans Day*, 1998.
2. “Tracing the Origins of Veteran’s Day” by Scott Kolb *Idaho Senior News*, November 2000.
3. *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*, Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, 2003. (One copy has been provided to each high school library in Idaho due to the generous support of Albertsons)
4. Congressional Medal of Honor Society (web site) <http://www.cmoths.org/community/links.htm>
5. Medal of Honor Citations <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>
6. The Medal of Honor: The Bravest of the Brave <http://www.medalofhonor.com/>
7. The Living Recipients of the Medal of Honor (web site)
http://www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/1st_floor/wall/2living.html
8. “I Died”, Source Unknown.
9. *American Valor* PBS DVD (\$29.98) or Video (\$24.98) from PBS. Lesson plan available at <http://www.pbs.org/weta/americanvalor/teachers/lesson1.html> (suggested)

Procedure for Teaching:

1. Begin the lesson by distributing a copy of “America’s Wars” (provided) to the students and ask them to review our nation’s major military conflicts, noting the number of participants, deaths, and living veterans. In addition, using a reliable news source, share with your students the most recent statistics for the current conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. With this brief background in America’s military conflicts, now distribute the article, “Tracing the Origins of Veterans Day” (provided) and have the students read about the history of this holiday. If you have limited time or students who struggle with reading, you may prefer to skip this article and orally summarize the main points.
3. Using *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*, now located in your media center/library, prepare a brief lecture about the history of the medal, famous recipients, and the hierarchy of our nation’s medals of valor, pp. 237-244.
4. Using The Living Recipients of the Medal of Honor web site, point out to your students how many of these medals have been presented and how many recipients are still living.
5. To bring more focus to the lesson and also make it more personal, select one or more of the six Idaho resident Congressional Medal of Honor recipients to recognize in depth. Using the book *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty* and/or the Congressional Medal of Honor Society web page, prepare a handout for one or more of the recipients listed below. It is highly recommend that you also include a copy of their Congressional Medal of Honor Citation that may be obtained from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society or the Medal of Honor Citations web page.

Name	Home Town	Branch of Service/Conflict	Included in book
Vernon Baker	Saint Maries	Army/WWII	Yes
David Bleak	Arco	Army/Korea	No
Bernard Fisher	Kuna	Air Force/Vietnam	Yes
Ed Freeman	Boise	Army/Vietnam	Yes
Arthur Jackson	Boise	Marines/WWII	Yes
Thomas Norris	Hayden Lake	Navy/Vietnam	No

6. Distribute the handout(s) you have created about the recipient(s) you have selected to focus in on to your class. Together, review and discuss the account of the military event and the citation outlining that event which resulted in their heroic recognition. As a possible variation, you may want to consider creating a handout for all six recipients and have all six accounts/citations examined (one per student) then follow up with a brief review/discussion of the six events.
7. As closure to this Veterans Day lesson, read “I Died” (provided) orally with your students.

Possible Extensions:

1. Show the film *American Valor* as a lead in or review to today’s lesson. This 90-minute film focus focuses in on two of Idaho’s recipients, Vernon Baker and Thomas Norris.
2. Have your students write an individual or a group letter to one or more of these true American heroes and thank them for their courage and commitment to our nation.

America's Wars

AMERICAN REVOLUTION (1775-1784)

Participants.....290,000
Deaths in service.....4,000

WAR of 1812 (1812-1815)

Participants.....287,000
Deaths in service2,000

INDIAN WARS (Approx. 1817-1898)

Participants.....106,000
Deaths in service.....1,000

MEXICAN WAR (1846-1848)

Participants.....79,000
Deaths in service.....13,000

CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)

Participants (Union).....2,213,000
Deaths in service (Union).....364,000
Participants (Confederate).....1,000,000
Deaths in service (Confederate).....133,821

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR (1898-1902)

Participants.....392,000
Deaths in service.....11,000

WORLD WAR I (1917-1918)

Participants.....4,744,000
Deaths in service.....116,000

WORLD WAR II (9/16/40 – 7/25/47)

Participants.....16,535,000
Deaths in service.....406,000

KOREAN CONFLICT (6/27/50 - 1/31/55)

Participants.....6,807,000
Deaths in service.....55,000

VIETNAM ERA (8/5/64 – 5/7/75)

Participants.....9,200,000
Deaths in service.....109,000

PERSIAN GULF WAR (Starting date is 8/2/90)

Participants.....3,800,000
Deaths in service.....9,000

AMERICA'S WARS TOTAL (Thru 7/1/97)

War Participants.....41,790,000
Deaths in service.....1,090,000

Tracing the Origins of Veterans Day

By Scott Kolb, *Idaho Senior News* (2000)

November 11 is Veterans Day. We all know, of course, the purpose of Veterans Day is to honor our nation's veterans – but the origins of the holiday have become somewhat obscure over the years. In fact, the holiday didn't begin as Veterans Day at all but rather as Armistice Day.

“The Great War”, World War One, ended officially on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. The next year, November 11 was set aside as Armistice Day in the United States. War veterans marched in parades through the streets of their hometowns. Politicians and veteran officers gave speeches and held ceremonies of thanks for the peace that had been so hard won.

In 1921 on this date, an unknown American soldier who had died in the war was interred in Arlington Cemetery on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the District of Columbia. Similar ceremonies took place in France and England, with each nation burying an unknown soldier in their own honored sites. In England this took place at Westminster Abbey and in France at the Arc de Triumph. This Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington has served as the focal point of honor to American's veterans of all services ever since.

On Memorial Day, 1958, two more unidentified American soldiers, one from the Second World War and one from Korea, were brought from overseas and interred next to the unknown soldier from World War One. In 1973 it was decided to make a place for an unknown soldier killed in Vietnam. This took place in 1984 and may perhaps be the last. Advancements in identification technology including DNA testing now enable the government to identify almost all remains.

To honor these unknown soldiers, representatives of all our nation's war dead an Army honor guard, the Old Guard of the 3rd U.S. Infantry, keeps a solemn vigil over the site day and night.

Armistice Day was officially recognized in 1926 through a Congressional resolution and a dozen years later it would become a national holiday. We might still be calling November 11 Armistice Day today had the Great War truly been the war to end all wars. But soon after the holiday was officially proclaimed, war again broke out in Europe. More than 16 million American would answer the call to arms in this bloody conflict, 407,000 of them would die in service of their country before the end of the war, more than 292,000 in combat.

In 1954 Representative Edwin K. Rees of Kansas forwarded a proposal to honor the sacrifices made by all Americans who fought in our nation's wars. Armistice Day would become Veterans Day.

In 1968 an act passed through Congress to change the observance of Veterans Day from November 11 to the fourth Monday in October. But the 11th was still an important historical date, especially to older Americans, and in 1978 Congress changed it back to the original date.

Veterans organizations such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars traditionally raise money for their charitable efforts by selling paper poppies made by disabled veterans. The poppy, a bright red wildflower, became a symbol of the sacrifice made by veterans in World War One after being immortalized in a poem by a young British officer and field surgeon, Major John McCrae, after a particularly bloody battle fought in a field of poppies in Belgium called Flanders Field.

Poppy seeds can lie dormant in the earth for years and will only grow when the soil has been disturbed. Flanders field had been a shell-pocked no-man's land for years between the

front lines of the Allies and the Huns. The year McCrae wrote the poem, the field bloomed with more poppies than anybody had ever seen before.

Every November 11 at 11 a.m., official ceremonies honoring Veterans Day take place at Arlington National Cemetery. At the Tomb of the Unknowns, a combined honor guard representing all the services executes "Present Arms". A presidential wreath is laid at the Tomb, a symbol of the nation's tribute to its fallen soldiers, followed by "Taps".

Although there are no longer an abundance of great parades or observances like our nation had in the past, it is traditional for all Americans to observe a moment of silence at 11:00 a.m. on November 11. Take some time on this date to remember those who served and those who fell to preserve the freedoms we enjoy the rest of the year.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

**In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.**

**We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.**

**Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.**

I Died

... at Bunker Hill. Grapeshot tore through my body at New Orleans. Crushing hooves with riders as swirls of blue and grey ... and red ... crashed down upon me in strange-sounding places like Chickamauga, Antietam, and Shiloh.

The heat and swamp sucked at my last moments in the wilds of Cuba. A green fog of poisonous gas slithered over the side and into my trench, where water stood mixed with slime and blood

I lay face down in fetid pools clogged with jungle vines, felt the hot sands of Africa burning through my back, lay with cold cheek against wet beach sand and fell from gingerbread doorways into cobblestone streets. I gasped for air and breathed fire and oily water.

Snow clung to my lashes and ice formed at the corners of my mouth as a tiny wisp of steam wafted from the crimson flow of life out of my ears and stomach.

As I fell forward, I felt the jagged pain of bamboo beneath the water tearing at my flesh.

I fought and died when I didn't know why. I was killed before I was old enough to vote. I never knew the pleasure of savoring the memories that come with old age. I left mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, children and sweethearts to weep after me. I lay where names and landscapes and faces were all foreign to me. To this day, no one knows where the earth swallowed me.

I was called every racial and ethnic slur under the sun. I was tall and short and thin and heavy and young and old and cheerful and sad. I was a shop steward, an insurance agent, a writer, an orange picker, and the head of a grocery chain stretching from Baltimore to St. Louis.

I lived around the corner, up the street, next door, over the garage, across the tracks, on the hill and out of a suitcase. I came from a family farm, college campus, factory, new-car agency, and Broadway.

I died that we would remain free, that liberty would not perish, that women and children would be safe from terror, that my home would be protected, that an idea would be proven right, that my friend might live, that people back home could make overtime in the plants, and that a sagging economy might be helped.

Sometimes I served my country, sometimes my ideals and sometimes my own ego.

But I served.

On Veteran's Day, I hope you pause for a few moments to think on these things. You are still free to think ... and speak ... and publish whatever you wish because I gave the most I had ... my all.

Some of you have known some of my pain, my tears, and the sickness of soul for the waste of human life.

Yet, the giving of my life was not wasted. For perhaps somehow, in some way, people will do something to end my dying.

My death has extended the time given you to do that something.

After the next war there may be no one left to honor the dead.

SOURCE UNKNOWN